

The Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art's Highly Anticipated Exhibition, Revealing Krishna: Journey to Cambodia's Sacred Mountain, Opens November 14

News Release

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Groundbreaking exhibition incorporates mixed reality and reveals the CMA's newly restored Cambodian masterwork, Krishna Lifting Mount Govardhan, through an integration of art and experiential digital design

Press Kit

[1]

Cleveland (November 10, 2021)—In 2015, the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Museum of Cambodia (NMC). As a result of the close collaborative relationship that resulted from this partnership, the NMC subsequently sent to Cleveland pieces belonging to a renowned fragmentary stone sculpture of about the year 600 in the CMA's collection, *Krishna Lifting Mount Govardhan* [2], which was long ago broken into many pieces that were found at different times. In addition, the CMA provided the NMC with pieces belonging to a monumental broken sculpture in its collection, also depicting *Krishna lifting Mount Govardhan* from the same time and place. This collaborative process led to the restoration of the two Krishna sculptures, both of which are on view in their newly restored forms for the first time in the CMA exhibition.

Organized by the CMA, *Revealing Krishna: Journey to Cambodia's Sacred Mountain* presents the story, context and new restoration of Cleveland's Krishna. The exhibition transports visitors to the dramatic floodplains of southern Cambodia and illustrates the history of the sculpture, spanning 1,500 years and three continents. The exhibition unveils Krishna alongside nine other related large-scale sculptures generously lent from the NMC, the Angkor Borei Museum and the Musée national des arts asiatiques—Guimet in Paris, through an integration of art, technology and experiential design. *Revealing Krishna* is on view in the Kelvin and Eleanor Smith Foundation Exhibition Hall from November 14, 2021, through January 30, 2022.

"The opportunity to restore these masterworks of Cambodian sculpture is yet another result of our recently renewed Memorandum of Understanding with the National Museum of Cambodia," said William

M. Griswold, director of the CMA. “This exhibition highlights the incredible story of our Krishna using immersive digital design. Unprecedented loans from our Cambodian and French colleagues reunite our Krishna with contemporaneous works from the same region for the first time in centuries.”

“The new restoration of the two important early sculptures of Krishna lifting Mount Govardhan resulted from years of collaborative research and generous exchanges of information among colleagues mainly from Cambodia and the French School of Asian Studies (EFEU),” said Sonya Rhie Mace, George P. Bickford Curator of Indian and Southeast Asian Art. “The Revealing Krishna exhibition presents a unique opportunity to see the masterworks from Phnom Da together, in their new, true forms.”

“Through immersive experiences, visitors will effortlessly understand the varied, multifaceted stories within this exhibition, learn the fascinating circumstances that brought the exhibition to fruition and grasp the magnitude of the Cleveland Krishna’s journey,” said Jane Alexander, chief digital information officer. “Meaningful innovation initiates relationships with the artwork, and the blend of the physical and digital will leave people talking about the art and the story it tells.”

Experiencing Revealing Krishna: Journey to Cambodia’s Sacred Mountain

Digital Experience

Journey to Phnom Da

The opening gallery transports visitors to the waterways of the Mekong River delta and Phnom Da, the sacred mountain where the Cleveland Krishna was found. Three 22-foot-long projections form an immersive corridor with views of the canals leading to Phnom Da in a cinematic and audio landscape. Filmed in Cambodia with a three-camera rig and drone, the projected footage allows visitors to see varied views of the surrounding landscape from the vantage point of the canals as they travel virtually toward the two-peaked mountain.

Sculpture Gallery

Sculptures of Angkor Borei

This sculpture gallery features five works from the ancient metropolis of Angkor Borei and nearby sacred sites. They depict both Hindu and Buddhist images made by Cambodian sculptors. Sandstone as a medium for sculpture in Southeast Asia rose to prominence in the 500s, and within a century, Cambodian artists in the region of Angkor Borei developed exceptional stone-carving skills and a local style widely celebrated for its power and sensitivity.

Digital Experience

HoloLens Experience: The Story of the Cleveland Krishna

In the third gallery, visitors are introduced to the world of Phnom Da and immersed in the global story of Cleveland’s Krishna through a mixed-reality Microsoft HoloLens 2 tour. The voice of Krishna guides visitors through an augmented-reality landscape that blends photorealistic virtual 3D models of locations and sculptures with ethereal motifs from the Krishna myth. This tour unfolds through each visitor’s HoloLens 2 headset, providing surround sound and situating the virtual experience as if the visitor were actually there. Visitors follow the journey of Krishna from Cambodia to Europe and Cleveland, and back

again. The experience culminates in a life-size 3D projection of the CMA Krishna completely restored and reinstated in the cave temple it originally occupied on Phnom Da. Visitors must be 12 or older to participate in the HoloLens portion of the exhibition.

Sculpture Gallery

Sculptures of Phnom Da

Around the year 600, artists in southern Cambodia achieved an impressive level of skill and inspired vision in the creation of divinities in human form that was unprecedented in the region. Eight monumental sculptures found on Phnom Da are the exemplars of the “Phnom Da Style” that launched the history of Cambodian art. In the fourth gallery, four of them are on view together for the first time: two Krishnas lifting Mount Govardhan, Krishna’s brother Balarama, and the four-armed dual god Harihara, who is half Vishnu and half Shiva. The sculptures of Phnom Da were all carved from monolithic blocks of dark-colored, highly polished sandstone and included a sturdy tenon that secured them to broad pedestals.

Digital Experience

Gods of Phnom Da

In the fifth gallery, the eight gods of Phnom Da are reunited, digitally, for the first time in centuries through interactive, motion-activated projections, providing detailed views of each one’s unique iconography. This experience allows visitors intimate, rarely seen views of these ancient sculptures through animations of high-resolution 3D models, projected at life size.

Digital Experience

Immersive Timeline—Gods of Phnom Da: Global Journeys

The exhibition culminates with a film installation narrated by director, actor and humanitarian Angelina Jolie and Loung Ung, the best-selling author of *First They Killed My Father*. They share with visitors the origins, discovery and conservation history of the eight gods of Phnom Da. Formatted as a panoramic horizon, eight screens are aligned to create an L-shaped configuration in the corner of the exhibition’s final gallery. Visitors are shown archival images of excavations, from the 1800s to 2021, as well as present-day footage and animated maps illustrating the story arc of these ancient sculptures. The film concludes by examining the ambitious conservation initiatives that have taken place throughout the past decade, which involved intensive collaboration and exchange with colleagues in Cambodia, and by highlighting the CMA’s evolving role of stewardship within the global landscape.

Please [view the press kit](#) ^[1] for more information and a selection of images.

Become a Member

See *Revealing Krishna* for free when you [become a CMA member](#) ^[3]. Members are admitted free to special exhibitions. Additionally, members have an opportunity to take advantage of other special discounts and exclusive events happening throughout the year.

Ticket Pricing

Adults \$15; seniors, college students with ID, and children ages 12 to 17 \$12; member guests \$8; children ages 11 and under and CMA members FREE.

Groups of 10 or more people may reserve tickets for \$10 per person. No guided tours will be offered. To book a group, contact groupsales@clevelandart.org.

The CMA recommends reserving tickets through its online platform by visiting the [Revealing Krishna exhibition webpage](#) [4]. Tickets can also be reserved by phone at 216-421-7350 or on-site at one of the ticket desks. Tickets are expected to book quickly and are not guaranteed. Your first choice of date and time may not be available, so please have other date and time options in mind when reserving tickets.

Advance ticket sales are highly recommended.

Combination Ticket Pricing

***Includes admission to *Picturing Motherhood Now* [5], on view through March 13, 2022.**

Adults \$25; seniors, college students with ID, and children ages 12 to 17 \$20; member guests \$10; children ages 11 and under and CMA members FREE.

Groups of 10 or more people may reserve tickets for \$20 per person. No guided tours will be offered. To book a group, contact groupsales@clevelandart.org.

To reserve combination tickets, visit the [Revealing Krishna ticket site](#) [6], choose a desired date and time and select the combination ticket. Tickets to both exhibitions must be used on the same day.

Revealing Krishna is a timed exhibition, so visitors can attend the untimed *Picturing Motherhood Now* exhibition before or after. Combination tickets are available during the time in which both shows are open: November 14, 2021, to January 30, 2022.

Combination tickets can also be reserved by phone at 216-421-7350 or on-site at one of the ticket desks.

Exhibition Catalogue

The complementary catalogue, *Revealing Krishna*, presents new research and discoveries centered on the early Cambodian masterpiece Krishna Lifting Mount Govardhan in the CMA's collection. Introducing the Cleveland Krishna as one of eight monumental sculptures of Hindu deities from the sacred mountain of Phnom Da, *Revealing Krishna* presents evidence for the sculpture's establishment in a cave sanctuary and recounts its fascinating journey from there to Cleveland in multiple pieces—including a decades-long detour buried in a garden in Belgium. An international team of specialists in archeology, art history and anthropology elucidate the long-fraught process of identifying the sculptural fragments that belong to the Cleveland Krishna and explain the new reconstructions unveiled in the 2021 exhibition *Revealing Krishna: Journey to Cambodia's Sacred Mountain*. They place the Cleveland Krishna amid the material traces of a sophisticated population based in the Mekong River delta at the ancient metropolis known as Angkor Borei. The authors reveal the long-lasting influence and prestige of the site, well into the Angkorian period, more than 600 years after the creation of the Cleveland Krishna and the gods of Phnom Da.

Authors

Sonya Rhie Mace, George P. Bickford Curator of Indian and Southeast Asian Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art; Bertrand Porte, Sculpture Conservator, École française d'Extrême Orient in Phnom Penh; CHEA Socheat, Head of Conservation and Restoration, National Museum of Cambodia, Phnom Penh; Pierre Baptiste, Curator of Southeast Asian Art, Musée national des arts asiatiques–Guimet, Paris; ANG Choulean, Professor of Historical Anthropology, Faculty of Archaeology, Royal University of Fine Arts, Phnom Penh; Beth Edelstein, Objects Conservator, The Cleveland Museum of Art; Colleen Snyder, Associate Objects Conservator, The Cleveland Museum of Art; Amaris Sturm, Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Objects Conservation, The Cleveland Museum of Art; Christian Fischer, Co-Director, UCLA / Getty Conservation Interdepartmental Program, Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, Los Angeles; Thierry Zéphir, Ingénieur d'études, Musée national des arts asiatiques–Guimet, Paris

Programming

Visions and Revisions: Behind the Scenes of [7]*Revealing Krishna* [7]

Sunday, December 12, 2021, 2 p.m.

Gartner Auditorium; Reserve free tickets [8]

Science, innovation and digital technologies were integral to the development of the unprecedented exhibition *Revealing Krishna: Journey to Cambodia's Sacred Mountain* at the CMA.

Hear how curators, conservators, engineers, physicists, materials scientists, and leaders in the field of technology and digital imaging worked together to understand and convey the form, history and context of the museum's monumental sandstone sculpture *Krishna Lifting Mount Govardhan*.

Conservator Beth Edelstein and digital prototyping director Ainsley Buckner of Sears think[box] at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) discuss how 3D modeling and printing of the sculpture were used in the conservation process. Curator Sonya Rhie Mace and digital modeling specialist Dale Utt III share how they worked together using 3D models to digitally reconstruct the image of the Cleveland Krishna and virtually install it in its original cave sanctuary. Jane Alexander, chief digital information officer, and Mark Griswold, CWRU professor of radiology, detail how digital innovations, including high-resolution holograms, allow visitors to effectively experience the sculpture's story.

Speakers

Beth Edelstein, Objects Conservator, The Cleveland Museum of Art

Sonya Rhie Mace, George P. Bickford Curator of Indian and Southeast Asian Art, The Cleveland Museum of Art

Jane Alexander, Chief Digital Information Officer, The Cleveland Museum of Art

Ainsley Buckner, Director of Prototyping, Art and Community Engagement at Sears think[box], Case Western Reserve University

Dale Utt III, Digital Artist, Owner, True Edge Archive

Mark Griswold, Faculty Director at the Interactive Commons, The Pavey Family Designated Professor of Innovative Imaging and Professor of Radiology, Case Western Reserve University

Friends of Photography and Asian Art Society Members Event

Friends of Photography Lecture: Konstanty Kulik ^[9]

Friday, December 10, 2021, 6 p.m.

The John C. and Sally S. Morley Family Foundation Lecture Hall

Friends of Photography and Asian Art Society members are invited to a presentation by VR movie director and cinematographer Konstanty Kulik, who is coming to Cleveland from Poland to explain how cutting-edge photographic technology—photogrammetry, LiDAR scanning, aerial drone shots—can make time travel possible. In *Revealing Krishna: Journey to Cambodia's Sacred Mountain*, this technology is used to take the viewer to ancient Cambodia and reveal its heritage through works of art envisioned in the finest detail. Kulik and his team helped create the amazing immersive and mixed-reality presentations of the Cambodian landscape and sacred space that are part of this groundbreaking exhibition. Attendees are encouraged to experience the technology in person by viewing the exhibition before Konstanty's talk.

Friends of Photography and Asian Art Society members will receive a digital invitation.

To join the Friends of Photography and to learn more, [click here](#) ^[10].

To join the Asian Art Society and to learn more, [click here](#) ^[11].

The Dr Ranajit K. Datta Distinguished Lecture in Indian Art

How Krishna Became Vishnu: Early Images of Krishna in India ^[12]

Sunday, January 23, 2022, 2 p.m.

Gartner Auditorium; Reserve free tickets ^[13]

Speaker: Charlotte Schmid, Directeur d'études, École française d'Extrême-Orient

Two thousand years ago, artists in Mathura, in northern India, created sculptures of a four-armed male divinity in human form. While many scholars identify this figure as the Hindu god Vishnu, there are strong arguments in favor of his identity as Krishna.

Texts that emerged during this period explain that Krishna was born in Mathura as an incarnation of Vishnu. However, in art there survive no depictions of the young Krishna until much later. How was Krishna represented in art before the fourth century AD? Does his appearance differ from that of Vishnu?

In this lecture, noted scholar Charlotte Schmid examines the early formulations of Vishnu and Krishna images in northern India to better understand the relationship between the two deities and how that relationship diverges from its description in texts.

This lecture is made possible by the Dr. Ranajit K. Datta in Memory of Kiran P. and S. C. Datta Endowment Fund.

Free Complementary Exhibition

Life and Exploits of Krishna in Indian Paintings ^[14]

Through February 13, 2022

Indian Painting Gallery, Gallery 242B

Twenty-one works from the Indian subcontinent, made between the mid-1600s and mid-1900s, place the pivotal moment when Krishna raised Mount Govardhan in the context of the conquests, miracles and pastimes of his early life story. An incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu, Krishna was born into a royal household under extraordinary circumstances. To hide him from the murderous wrath of his uncle, Krishna's parents placed him among humble cowherders, where he grew up in the forest, enjoying dairy treats as a baby and frolicking with the cowherd boys and milkmaids in the forest and the river. Intermittently, Krishna slayed demon assassins sent by his uncle and defeated redoubtable enemies, including the king of the gods, Indra, himself. Each episode contains theological underpinnings that artists communicated in a wide range of styles suited to the wishes of their patrons. Visually, this group of paintings from the museum's collection reflect the dramatic shift in social order and artistic practice that occurred between the 1700s and 1900s with the introduction of British colonial rule and the transition to the modern era.

Additional Information

The CDC and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health recommend wearing face coverings in public settings to slow the spread of COVID-19 and the Delta variant. The CMA requires everyone—all visitors, staff and volunteers—to wear a face covering inside the building.

Museum staff will sanitize the HoloLens 2 devices with disinfecting wipes and a microfiber cloth between each use. The CMA's current hours of operation are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Friday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. The museum is closed Mondays. Updated hours will be announced as decided. Visit cma.org ^[15] to stay up to date on this information.

The exhibition is organized in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia and in collaboration with the National Museum of Cambodia, the École française d'Extrême-Orient and the Musée national des arts asiatiques—Guimet.

The restoration of *Krishna Lifting Mount Govardhan*, expertly undertaken by Cleveland Museum of Art conservation specialists, was funded by a grant from the Bank of America Art Conservation Project.

The CMA gratefully acknowledges these valued exhibition sponsors:

Principal support is provided by Rebecca and Irad Carmi, Mary Lynn Durham and William Roj, and the Rajadhyaksha Family and DLZ Corporation. Major support is provided by Raj and Karen Aggarwal, the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, and the Eugene V. and Clare E. Thaw Charitable Trust. Additional support is provided by DLR Group | Westlake Reed Leskosky, Carl T. Jagatich, the John D. Proctor Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Paul E. Westlake Jr., and in memory of Dr. Norman Zaworski, MD. Generous support is provided by Dr. Michael and Mrs. Catherine Keith.

The Official Technology Partner is Microsoft.

This exhibition is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

“The Story of the Cleveland Krishna” HoloLens Experience was developed in collaboration with the mixed-reality development partner the Interactive Commons at Case Western Reserve University.

All exhibitions at the Cleveland Museum of Art are underwritten by the CMA Fund for Exhibitions. Generous annual support is provided by an anonymous supporter, Dr. Ben H. and Julia Brouhard, Mr. and Mrs. Walter R. Chapman Jr., the Jeffery Wallace Ellis Trust in memory of Lloyd H. Ellis Jr., Janice Hammond and Edward Hemmelgarn, Eva and Rudolf Linnebach, William S. and Margaret F. Lipscomb, Tim O'Brien and Breck Platner, Anne H. Weil and the Womens Council of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

We recognize Dr. Gregory M. Videtic and Mr. Christopher R. McCann, who are graciously linked to this exhibition through the Leadership Circle.

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org [16].

[Revealing Krishna Press Kit](#) [17]

[Press Announcements](#) [18]

Source URL: <https://www.clevelandart.org/about/press/media-kit/cleveland-museum-art%E2%80%99s-highly-anticipated-exhibition-revealing-krishna-journey-cambodia%E2%80%99s-sacred>

Links

[1] <https://www.clevelandart.org/documents/other/revealing-krishna-press-kit>

[2] <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1973.106>

[3] <https://engage.clevelandart.org/donate/contribute2>

[4] <https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/revealing-krishna-journey-cambodias-sacred-mountain>

[5] <https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/picturing-motherhood-now>

[6] <https://engage.clevelandart.org/overview/6878>

[7] <https://www.clevelandart.org/events/special-events/visions-and-revisions-behind-scenes-revealing-krishna>

- [8] <https://engage.clevelandart.org/6778/7574>
- [9] https://www.clevelandart.org/events/special%20events/Konstanty_Kulik_Lecture
- [10] <https://www.clevelandart.org/join-and-give/membership/affinity-groups/friends-of-photography>
- [11] <https://www.clevelandart.org/join-and-give/membership/affinity-groups/asian-art-society>
- [12] <https://www.clevelandart.org/events/lectures/dr.-ranajit-k.-datta-distinguished-lecture-indian-art>
- [13] <https://engage.clevelandart.org/6778/7571>
- [14] <https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/life-and-exploits-krishna-indian-paintings>
- [15] <https://www.clevelandart.org/cma.org>
- [16] <https://www.clevelandart.org>
- [17] <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wl2c5dbu23po8mi/AABM-Tfqah-1rGQR8xh7lo-ba?dl=0>
- [18] <https://www.clevelandart.org/about/press/media-kit>